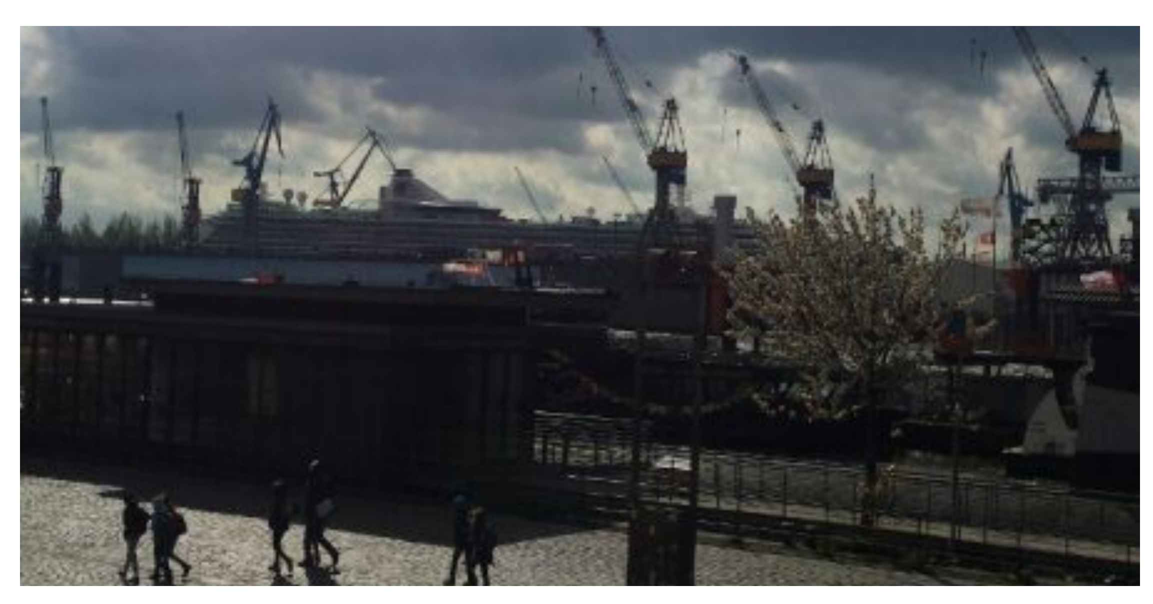






DEBORAH COWEN 2018-05-07

DISRUPTING DISTRIBUTION: SUBVERSION, THE SOCIAL FACTORY, AND THE “STATE” OF SUPPLY CHAINS

ECONOFICTION CAPITAL, CAPITALISM, CIRCULATORY SYSTEM, CONTAINER, LOGISTICS, SUPPLY CHAINS

We have entered a time of logistics space. Contemporary capitalism is organized as a dispersed but coordinated system, where commodities are manufactured across vast distances, multiple national borders, and complex social and technological infrastructures. Geopolitical economies that were previously governed largely at the national scale – even though as part of a global system of trading nation states – have been reordered into transnational circulatory systems. The global circulation of stuff is organized around the standard shipping container and the intermodal infrastructures that support its mobility across rail, road, and especially sea. Ninety percent of the world’s commodities move through maritime space, much of it in the form of containers. Like giant Lego blocks, these boxes move in vast and growing quantities, eliminating much of the human labor of distribution. Thomas Reifer goes as far as to suggest that if Marx were with us today, he would begin his analysis with the container in place of the commodity.

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